

Reflections • Tuesday 30 November 2021 • By Terry Gatfield

The Taizé community's songs and stillness: a spiritual game changer



Terry Gatfield and The Rev'd Ann Edwards at St Mark's, The Gap in November 2021

caused by the German occupation in the Second World War. However, in more recent years, Taizé has become one of the world's most important sites of Christian pilgrimage, with a focus on youth. Over 100,000 young people from around the world make pilgrimages to Taizé each year for prayer, Bible study, sharing, and communal work.

Taizé, for most people connected to the Christian faith, comprises a delightful medley of songs and chants. However, behind the incredible array of songs and music resides a passionate, ecumenical, monastic community of some 100 brothers. They are drawn from a variety of Protestant and Catholic persuasions located in a small picturesque town, Taizé, in the French province of Burgundy.

The [Taizé community](#) was formed by Brother Roger in 1940, originally dedicated to reducing the suffering

Through the community's ecumenical outlook, pilgrims are encouraged to live in the spirit of kindness, simplicity and reconciliation. With these charisms, fraternities have now been formed in many of the poorer regions of the world including in Calcutta, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Algeria, Brazil, Kenya, Senegal and the Hell's Kitchen neighbourhood of Manhattan.

Perhaps the most significant aspects that have flowed into the wider global community are the songs, music and worship style of the community. The songs primarily comprise short melodic chants often based on the Psalms. They are usually given to us in a variety of different languages and are frequently sung in a multipart harmony. Taizé music has formed the backbone of many contemplative Christian church services in the west.

My wife, Rosemary, and I had the joy of spending a week with the Taizé community in 2008 along with some 5,000 others, mainly young people, from across umpteen countries. There we sampled the joy and wonder of falling in love with the simplicity and passion of expressing worship in a form seldom experienced in Australian churches. It was a spiritual game changer.

However, Taizé is not just about songs – it is also about silence and stillness – it is about harnessing the contemplative spirit. Our world has become a deafening place and a 24/7 cacophony of noise and distractions that now demand our attention. It so easily drowns out the gentle voice of the Spirit. Taizé invites us to be in stillness with the Holy Spirit in the moment.

St Marks, The Gap is hosting an 'Advent 2021: Contemplative Series' of Taizé services to provide a space to enable us to more appropriately reflect on the deep meaning of Advent, the month leading up to the birth of Christ.

The first service of the series was held on Sunday 28 November, with more services to follow on the first three Sundays of December. Music is provided by guitarist Dr Peter Kline. The services commence at 7.00pm, followed by wine and cheese from 7.40pm.

You are warmly invited to these special Taizé services in our church at the corner of Waterworks Rd and Kullaroo St, The Gap, Brisbane. Join us as we take time out for stillness, restoration and reflection in the company of the Holy Spirit during this busy season.

To find out more about Taizé, visit the [Taizé community's website](#) and listen to Taizé music on the [Taizé YouTube channel](#)

Sunday Devotions • Tuesday 30 November 2021 • By Aunty Dr Rose Elu

Sunday Devotion: 5 December 2021, Second Sunday of Advent

Being attentive to the voice of God in our wilderness



Main Readings: [Malachi 3.1-14](#); Psalm: Song of Zechariah (APBA p.10 or p.425); [Philippians 1.1-11](#); [Luke 3.1-6](#)

Supplementary Readings: [Psalm 85](#); [John 5.30-37a](#); [Isaiah 63.15-64.4](#); [Psalm 129](#); [2 Peter 3.1-9](#)

“...the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness ([Luke 3.2](#)).”

Growing up, my father told me about the migration of my people from Saibai in the Torres Strait Islands to the Country of the Gudang and Yadaykhenu* on the Northern Peninsula Area (Cape York Peninsula). My people needed to migrate to seek safety from the threat of malaria and tsunami. We believe that God spoke into the hearts of the Saibai Elders and led them to the First Peoples of the peninsula. We understood that in order to move to another people's territory that we had to seek their permission and negotiate with them. So, my father, who was the Chair of the island's Elders, went to the peninsula at night to seek this permission. He was met on the beach by the peninsula's First Peoples who were waiting for an unknown arrival – the Creator Spirit had spoken into the hearts of their Old People and directed them to the beach to wait for and welcome my people who arrived by lugger.

Just as John the Baptist was attentive to the voice of God in the wilderness, my people on the island of Saibai and the First Peoples of the peninsula listened to God's voice in their hearts and sought God's purpose.

God calls us to respect one another. Even though the Government drew up boundaries ahead of my people's arrival to the peninsula without the consent of the peninsula's Traditional Custodians, we knew that we had to seek permission from the Custodians and respect their protocols before we migrated. They welcomed us graciously and we live together harmoniously to this day.

Being a baptised people means that we are attentive to God's voice and calls in our hearts so we can live harmoniously.

* Other First Nations peoples of the peninsula also welcomed Saibai people into their traditional lands during this period.